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SUBJECT: UAE: WE WILL BE AMONG "BEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD" BY 2021

¶1. (U) Summary. On February 6, at the end of a three-day cabinet retreat in the western region of Abu Dhabi, the UAE government laid out its vision for the federation on its 50th anniversary in 2021. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum (MbR), Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, announced the UAE National Historic Charter for 2021, a blueprint for becoming "one of the best countries in the world". The detailed four-part plan listed heritage, federalization, Emiratisation and sustainable development as the pillars upon which the country will build its society and economy for the next 11 years. End Summary.

¶2. (U) UAE government media agency WAM released the charter following MbR's announcement. Details of the plan were widely reported in both English and Arabic media within the UAE and regionally. An assistant to Minister of State Maitha Al Shamsi told POL Assistant the charter reflected the vision of President Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan with input from the leaders of each emirate. Produced by the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, the charter addresses only Emirati citizens who account for approximately 15% of the UAE population.

¶3. (U) The ten-page, single-spaced document makes multiple references to Emiratis' moderate brand of Islam and asserts "Arabic will re-emerge as a dynamic and vibrant language, expressed everywhere in speech and writing as a living symbol of the nation's progressive Arab-Islamic values." The charter also: encourages large families endowed with a sense of their Emirati heritage; emphasizes the federation as a cohesive unit and commits to high socio-economic standards across all seven emirates; calls for a knowledge-based entrepreneurial economy; and focuses on quality of life issues including healthy lifestyle choices and environmental protection.

¶4. (U) The charter's economic section highlights Emiratisation --- a government effort to increase the percentage of Emiratis employed in the public and private sector --- as an entrepreneurial driving force and promotes the UAE's role as a leading regional business and transport hub. By 2021, the UAE will become "one of the best places in the world to do business" by looking beyond traditional economic models and "adapting to changing global realities, such as the rise of new economic powerhouses."

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The charter was likely intended as a follow-up to the 2007 UAE Federal Strategy, a three-year plan for modernizing government and society also announced by MbR in his role as Prime Minister. Largely an internal exercise, the 2007 national strategy was billed as a radical reform of the UAE government in the areas of education, health, justice and government services. Unlike the previous national strategy, the 2010 charter appears to have two audiences. Taken literally, it is a blueprint for Emirati

individuals, families, businesses and government ministries to build "one of the best countries in the world" by 2021. The secondary audience --- the international business community --- is reminded the UAE remains an attractive place to invest where "progressive and moderate" Islam is an official government policy.

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